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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TWO HUMAN RIGHTS CASES: KHALIL AND HUSYENOV BEATINGS

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[1B.](#) BAKU 00557

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[¶1.](#) (SBU) The GOAJ continues to maintain that opposition Azadliq newspaper reporter Agil Khalil was stabbed by Sergey Strelkalin in a homosexual lovers, quarrel. Strelkalin, who faces criminal assault and narcotics charges, was scheduled to be tried June 24 in a Baku municipal court (Nasimi district), but the presiding judge delayed the trial at the request of the Prosecutor General's representative, who argued that Khalil was a mandatory witness and was not present. The presiding judge ruled that the trial would resume on July 1, and that Khalil had to attend. The Prosecutor General's office has publicly maintained that Khalil is banned from leaving Azerbaijan because he is a witness in the Strelkalin trial, a point that Presidential Advisor Ali Hasanov also made to the Ambassador on June 19 (ref a). Previously, Khalil told us that he did not plan on attending the trial, and that his lawyer had notified the authorities about Khalil's position. When asked, Khalil said he did not think the Prosecutor General would force him to attend the trial.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Separately, GOAJ authorities prevented Khalil from leaving the country on June 19. Khalil told the French Charge that he was followed to the airport by four unmarked vehicles. Upon arrival at the airport, he was approached by a stranger who asked him to carry a package on the plane. Khalil refused. When he arrived at passport control, there was a 30-minute back-and-forth between the Border Guard Officer and someone on the phone, with an apparent disagreement over whether Khalil should be allowed to leave the country. Khalil finally was informed that he was legally unable to leave the country and was allowed to leave the airport. Khalil said that, in the aftermath of this June 19 incident, he believes that he still is being followed. He is still being accompanied by Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) bodyguards, which he said has made him feel safer.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) The Embassy spoke with Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS) chairman Emin Huseynov on June 23 to get an update on his medical condition. Per ref B, Huseynov reportedly was beaten by an unidentified, non-uniformed individual while in police detention on June [¶14.](#) Huseynov told the Embassy that his health is improving, but he still suffers from headaches, neck pain, vision problems, and a persistent noise in his ears. Huseynov remains hospitalized, and he is unsure when he will be discharged. Huseynov also told us that the hospital staff is

treating him for a brain concussion, although the doctors reportedly are afraid to admit officially Huseynov's symptoms.

¶4. (SBU) Huseynov highlighted that in the aftermath of his reported June 14 beating, there has been an attempt to publicly slander him and the IRFS. He noted a June 20 article in Ses newspaper, which is affiliated with the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, that claimed he had links with western missionary groups and that he supports ties with the terrorist PKK organization.

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